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MYTHOLOGY OF THE MISSION INDIANS.

THE following creation myth is that of the San Luiseños, and was translated from the Spanish as related by an old man of La Jolla Indian reservation by Mary C. B. Watkins.

In the beginning Tú-co-mish (night) and Ta-nó-wish (earth) sat crouching, brooding, silent. Then Tú-co-mish said, "I am older than you." Ta-nó-wish said, "No, I am stronger than you." So they disputed. Then Tú-co-mish caused Ta-nó-wish to go to sleep. When she woke she knew that something had happened, and that she was to be the Mother. She said, "What have you done?" "Nothing. You have slept." "No," she said. "I told you that I am stronger (morally) than you."

Soon within her grew all things and she sat erect and round. Wy-ót was her first born, the father (in a care-taking sense) of all things. The grasses, trees, birds, all things were born of Ta-nó-wish.

Then Evil, Tó-wish, wished to be born. He tried to escape by the ears, eyes, and nose, but at last passed from the mouth with a t-s-i-z (hissing noise). He is nothing but spirit. He has no form whatsoever.

Tá-quish is a ball of light, and is a witch. He was the third son.

The frog was beautifully made, white and red, with great eyes. Wy-ót said, "Oh, my daughter, you are so beautiful." But her lower limbs were thin and ugly. When she saw men walk she was jealous, and hated Wy-ót, cursing him with terrible words.

Then Wy-ót said, "In ten months I shall die. When the great star rises and the grass is high, I shall go." (Here the narrator named all the large stars, counting ten months in that way.) Wy-ót said to his people, "You have never killed anything; now you may kill the deer. Make an awl, gather shoots of bushes and grasses and make a basket to contain my ashes." Then he taught them how to make baskets, redas, ollas, and all their arts. He died in the spring (May).

They burned his body, but his spirit became the moon. His ashes were placed in a long basket, and for this reason they pass the basket in front of the chief dancer and mourn. They sing "Wy-ót, Wy-ót," nine times, then "Ne-yóniga (My head) Ne-cháya, tomáve."

The dances were to please the moon and prevent his waning.

Another old man of the San Luiseños gave his version of the story in a different way.

THE DEATH OF WY-ÓT.

Wy-ót went every day to a clear, cold spring, so large (spreading

his arms). The frog saw him day after day and hated him more, though Wy-ót always saluted him kindly. One day the frog, Wa-há-wut, said, "I will spit in the water and curse him because he made my legs so miserably." So he spit three times in the water. Then Wy-ót became sick, and in ten months, counted by the rising of the brightest stars, he died. He gave them wise laws and taught them all their arts. Before his death he said, "From my ashes shall spring the most precious gift to all my children."

Then the oak-tree grew from his ashes. Very fast it grew, very lovely, with acorns hanging like apples so thick and fine. All the birds and animals and men watched it day and night that not a seed should be lost.

Then after a while the acorns were ripe. The men said to the crow, "Go to the large star (possibly Vega) and find Wy-ót."

The crow flew high and higher, but returned. The eagle was sent, but without result. All the birds were sent. No one could find Wy-ót.

Then the hummingbird went like the arrow from the strong man's bow. After days of waiting he returned with this message from Wy-ót: "Eat of the seeds of my tree, all birds and animals. Men must make flour out of them, and make little cakes." So all men were glad and made the fiesta of the bellota (acorn, still used by the Mission Indians for food).

This myth of the San Luiseños is doubly important at present when, for the first time since pioneer days, attention is directed to the folk-lore of the Mission Indians.

In the first place it corrects an error in my translation of the mythology of the Diegueños, as published in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*.

In old Cinon Duro's version of the myth there was a confusion in his account of the frog's action as producing the death of the hero-god (Tu-chai-pai). By a mistake in pronouns it was made to appear that the frog by poisoning the water brought about his own death as well as that of Tu-chai-pai. The sentence on page 183 of the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xiv. No. liv. should read as corrected, "By that time the frog had planned a wrong deed; he meant to exude poison into the water that Tu-chai-pai might swallow it and die."

In the second place, and especially, this San Luiseño version of the myth is valuable as proving its primitive character, and its freedom from what might be imagined to be traces of Christian influence in the account of the death of a hero-god. Father Boscana, an early Franciscan missionary, with a breadth of mind unfortu-

nately lacking in most of his co-workers, transcribed and recorded as of interest and value the primitive myths current among the Indians when he first went among them.

“Father Geronimo Boscana,” says Bancroft, “gives us the following relation of the faith and worship of the Agagchemem nations in the valley and neighborhood of San Capistrano. We give first the version held by the highlanders of the interior country three or four leagues inland from San Juan Capistrano.”

And it is this version which is still preserved in the Diegueño and San Luiseño myths which I have given, as told by Indians dwelling in the highlands within twelve miles of each other, and almost in a direct line back sixty miles or so from San Juan Capistrano on the coast.

As Boscana’s story is important in itself and for comparison, I quote part of it herewith. It is interesting to note its similarity even as to the name of the hero-god, with the San Luiseño story.

“Before the material world at all existed there lived two beings, brother and sister, of a nature that cannot be explained, the brother living above and his name signifying the heavens, and the sister living below and her name signifying Earth. From the union of these two there sprang a numerous offspring. Earth and sand were the first-fruits of this marriage; then were born rocks and stones; then trees both great and small; then grass and herbs; then animals; lastly was born a great personage called Ouiot, who was a great captain.

“By some unknown mother many children of a medicine race were born to this Ouiot. All these things happened in the north, but as the people multiplied they moved toward the south, the earth growing larger also, and extending itself in the same direction.

“In process of time, Ouiot growing old, his children plotted to kill him, alleging that the infirmities of age made him unfit to govern them or attend to their welfare. So they put a strong poison in his drink, and when he drank of it a sore sickness came upon him. He rose up and left his home in the mountains and went down to what is now the seashore, though at that time there was no sea there. His mother, whose name is Earth, mixed him an antidote in a large shell and set it out in the sun to brew; but the fragrance of it attracted the Coyote, who came and overset the shell.

“So Ouiot sickened to death, and though he told his children that he would shortly return and be with them again, he has never been seen since. All the people made a great pile of wood and burned his body there, and just as the ceremony began, the Coyote leaped upon the body saying that he would burn with it; but he only tore a piece of flesh from the stomach and escaped. After that the title of

the Coyote was changed from Eyacque which means Sub-Captain, to Eno, that is to say, Thief and Cannibal."

From the time of Father Boscana to the present day, the mythology of the Indians of the interior of southern California has remained overlooked and unrecorded; and the fact that there still exist fragments of primitive myths of so superior a character should lead the exertions of scientists in this direction, since all that is of value in this sort is hanging on a thread as precarious as a spider's web, and will perish in less than ten years, with the passing of the centenarians who still cherish as sacred the heritage of myths and legends from the past.

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